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**Oracle State Park
could open part time
in February 2012**

A successful public fund drive will assure the re-opening of Oracle State Park on Saturdays and allow the park to resume its unique environmental education programs for elementary level schoolchildren on weekdays. The 4,000-acre wildlife reserve park has been closed for nearly two years.

A joint funding plan between Arizona State Parks and the non-profit Friends of Oracle State Park (FOSP), which will cover operating expenses for the part time schedule, has been signed. Under the plan, the state parks board will release about \$40,000 and the Friends will pay \$21,000, half of which must come from new donations, a letter solicitation campaign, memberships, sponsorships, and other fund-raising projects -- many to be announced in the near future.

“We worked very closely with the Friends over the last several months to put this plan together,” said Renée Bahl, executive director of Arizona State Parks. “It is a fantastic advocacy group.”

Under the plan, the park will be open to the public on Saturdays in February, March, April, September, October, and November 2012 and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays during those months for the student education programs. More than 30,000 elementary schoolchildren have learned environmental education lessons at the park over the last two decades. They have come from schools in northwest Tucson, Marana, Amphi, Flowing Wells, and many charter and private institutions.

“We will be reaching out to individuals, businesses, corporations, and other organizations,” said Cindy Krupicka, president of FOSP. “The park is a jewel, with marvelous terrain and mountain vistas, wild creatures, oak-manzanita woodlands, and hiking/cycling trails that encourage visitors to get up close to it all.

“Everybody who loves nature is encouraged to join us in raising the funds by donating generously, and by volunteering to help with the environmental education programs,” she added. Full details are at the Friends’ website www.friendsOSP.org.

Oracle will be the last of the state parks to reopen after budget cuts by the state legislature in 2009. Park volunteers and FOSP have continued to coordinate trail maintenance, forestry dead-tree projects, and repairs to the historic Kannally Ranch House and grounds.

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